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L'UMILE PIANTA.

FOR THE CHILDREN'S SAKE.

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FROM THE BACK ROW.

A STUDENT'S IMPRESSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE.

To the old student, Conferences mean even more, we may dare to think, than to the earnest parent seeking after truth—they are meters whereby we measure the growth of that thought into which our training initiated us. Each Conference seems to have a leading idea threading through it. Two years ago right methods of teaching seemed most prominent, this year lessons and habits though noticed as means to an end paled before the end—the achievement of character.

Tuesday morning brought a very good audience together for the early hour, and an informal and rapturous students' gathering took place at the top of the stairs. The day began with Miss Mason's timely warning against one-sidedness. "Education is an atmosphere, *and* a discipline, *and* a life." The unifying idea for all these is, that doctrine which is dear to us not as "the stupidity of a final opinion," but as the base on which all our future opinion may be upreared. Education is the science of relations whereby we absorb the atmosphere, profit by the discipline, and live the life.

The back row where the students seemed to gather by instinct heard many a sentence which recalled the open windows, the distant mountains, and the atmospherical "education" of old days, and it enjoyed the references to our beloved "teachers' creed" in the Spanish Chapel.

It was a students' morning, for after the few pleasant words of the Lady President students of different generations read papers on our methods of attacking different subjects. Miss Hammond's paper on "Picture Talks" started with a definition both of true art and of the effect we expect this to have on character. We were told to consider three points in such lessons—

- (1) The meaning of the Picture,
- (2) The beauty of the rendering,
- (3) The personality of the artist.

The succeeding papers, on Reading, Grammar, Nature Teaching, and Scripture, though clear and lucid, trod on too familiar ground to need especial mention here.

Tuesday afternoon was quite "throng"; Harley Street could hardly contain all those who went to hear the lectures on Nursery subjects. Mr. Paton's lecture on "Ruskin," at 5 o'clock, was most amusing. It was a little difficult to discover at first whether he had come to bless him altogether, or curse him altogether, but he finally declared in favour of that article in the creed of St. George's Guild which speaks of manual labour. "Dig and true dignity will be yours" was the keynote, and it is of interest that at Marlborough last winter navvy gangs were formed to enlarge the playing ground.

Mrs. Franklin once more kindly extended her hospitality in the evening to students and others. There we saw the handiworks of the present Scale How generation—the clay

modelling of flowers and the advanced Sloyd were much admired. But of course the business of the evening was talk—and we talked—as only old friends gathered from the ends of the earth can.

Wednesday was glorified by Miss Montague's paper on "Hero-Worship." I hope we have all been burning incense at shrines, obvious or not, ever since, and all that we heard of reverence for our fellow creatures was most beautiful.

Wednesday night found us all gathered to listen to Lady Aberdeen who spoke very well on the "National" side of the Union, pointing out its duty towards the nation's conception of education. Mr. Montipire followed and discoursed on "Motives." Condensed, his speech resulted in "Do the right thing from whatever motives you can and the right feeling will probably follow." There was an enormous audience. Finding individual friends was nearly impossible, but as the numbers testified to the ever-widening circle of those interested all was as it should be.

Thursday was a day of question and answer. We had a delightful paper in the morning on the "onliness" of only children, and another very interesting one on the father's place in education. This somehow turned into a pæan of co-education, which the fathers in the audience mostly favoured strongly, and a delightful old man arose to say that in 1846 he had established such a school on Pestalozzian lines, but had been obliged to abandon that feature of it through local opposition.

Thursday afternoon was set apart for discussions, and it showed how truly we are a Parents' Union when member after member of the audience arose and gave their experiences and opinions—it truly was "Parents in Council" as we have it in Miss Mason's book. Exaggeration, the use of money, temper, and other practical points were considered.

On Friday children's religion was discussed, and a member of the audience added value to all that we heard by the suggestion that other religions than his own should be told to a child as fairy stories, that he might gather the grains of truth in all. The afternoon service at St. Mary Abbots was a very fit ending for our week, and no doubt the sermon with its lesson of "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy

youth " will linger in our memories, but one must be glad no children were present, for a soul and a hereafter were denied to animals, and if there is one thing dear to every child's heart it is the belief that it will meet its pets in heaven. The garden party at Mrs. Winkworth's was another delightful opportunity for friendly chatter and exchange of ideas, though the number of students present was small.

In considering the Conference as a whole the marked advance in the character of the audience was most striking. Many more people were present than before, and they seemed altogether keener. Every point made by every speaker was noted, not by critical and curious strangers and amateurs, but by persons to whom such matters really seemed of vital importance. It proved, were proof necessary, that it is possible for people of different creeds, stations, opinions, ages, and sexes, to meet and discuss with mutual helpfulness, and without wrangling argument, a subject on which all thought deeply and few thought alike. And that because our differences sink into merely individual choice of means before the recognition of the great unifying idea, set before us by our "Captain, figure Education is an atmosphere, *and* a discipline, *and* a life."

R. A. P.

CONFERENCE, 1901.

The sun was shining on the street,
Shining with all his might;
He did his very best to make
The students gay and bright.
Though some of them had passed, I fear,
A very troubled night.

"Oh students come and lecture us,"
The Conference did beseech,
"A pleasant paper—clearly read—
To teach us how to teach.
We cannot fix on more than six
To lend an ear to each."

Two anxious students trembled forth
This mild request to greet:
Their faces washed, their dresses brushed,
Their shoes were clean and neat
(The latter was, of course, because
A platform shows one's feet!)

Two other students hastened up,
And yet another two.
And so the number swelled to six,
That's two and two and two,
All tripping on the platform steps
And looking very blue.

The Chairman and the Principal
Discoursed an hour or so
(The latter did by proxy,
We wished it were not so).
And all the little students sat
And waited in a row.